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F O R T U N E S W A S H E D A W A Y

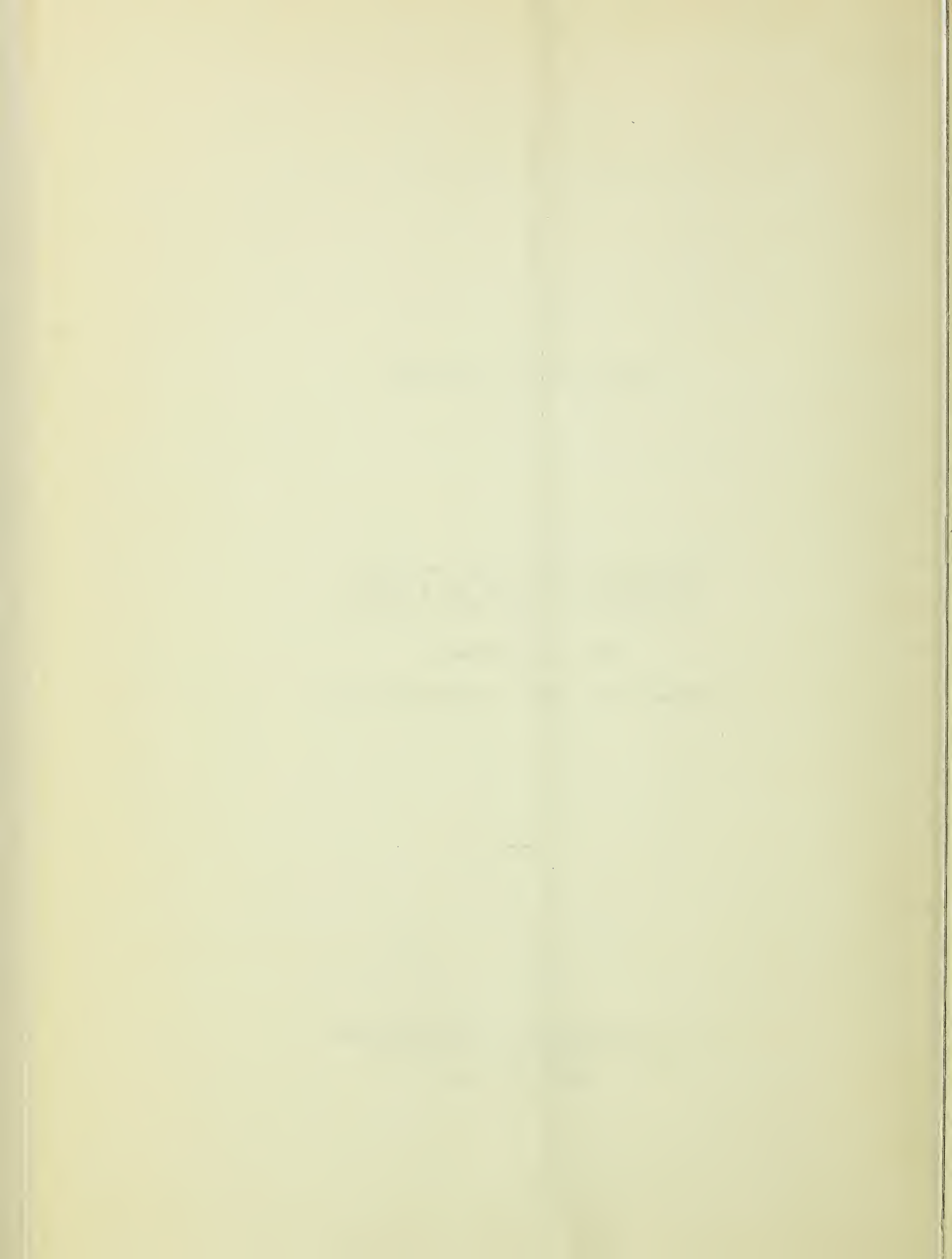
"CORN KING OF INDIANA"

Broadcast No. 40 in a series
of discussions of soil con-
servation in the Ohio Valley.

WLW, Cincinnati

January 28, 1939 6:45-7:00 p.m.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
Dayton, Ohio



SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

In recognition of his services during the Revolutionary War, Captain George Rogers Clark was given a rolling tract of land in Southern Indiana. Today it is known as Clark County. Many small stream valleys, narrow and deep feed Silver Creek and the Ohio, and the hilly farms are poor. But Clark County contains some of the finest corn land in Indiana, a state justly famed for corn production and corn kings. This is the story of a Clark County farm, of three generations of corn growers and soil conservers, of William Carr Lentz. In 1924...

FATHER

Carr, this land belonged to my father before me. He took care of it. I have taken care of the land, best I knew how. You must take care of it.

ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE.

ANNOUNCER

In 1928...

SPEAKER

Carr Lentz, you are the winner of the ten ear sweepstakes at the Clark County Show!

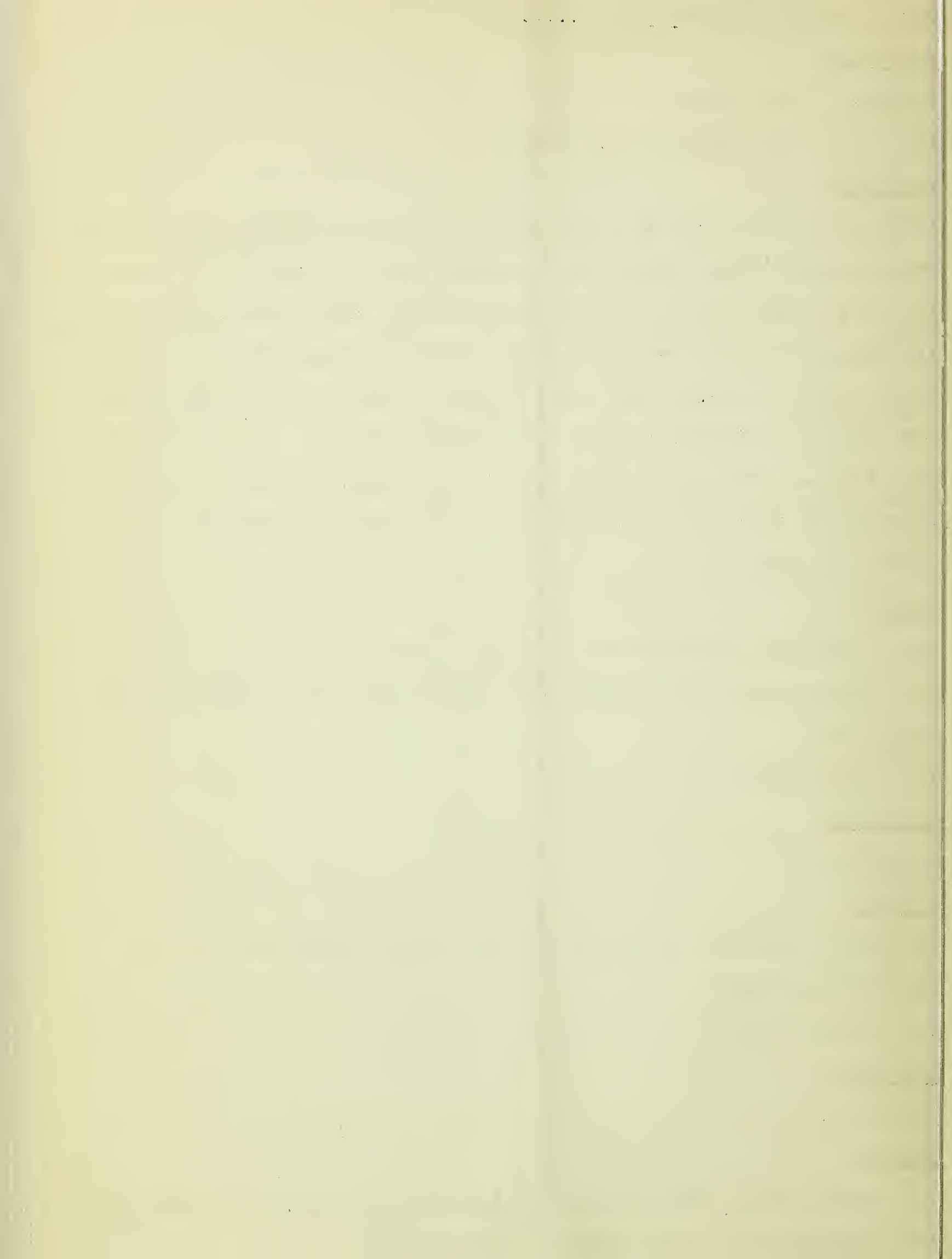
ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE.

ANNOUNCER

In 1929...

SPEAKER

The grand champion ten ears at the Indiana State Show, produced and exhibited by William Carr Lentz, Clark County!



ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE.

ANNOUNCER

In 1934...

SPEAKER

Here is the result. The new president of the Indiana Corn Growers' Association is Carr Lentz!

SOUND: Applause, fading into...

ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE.

ANNOUNCER

In 1935...

SOUND: Telegraph key behind following speech.

SPEAKER

William Carr Lentz, Clark County, Indiana, produces the Grand Champion ten ears at the International Hay and Grain Show...corn king of the world!

ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE.

ANNOUNCER

And in 1938...

SOUND: Door opens and closes.

FATHER

Well, Carr, how are things going this morning?

CARR

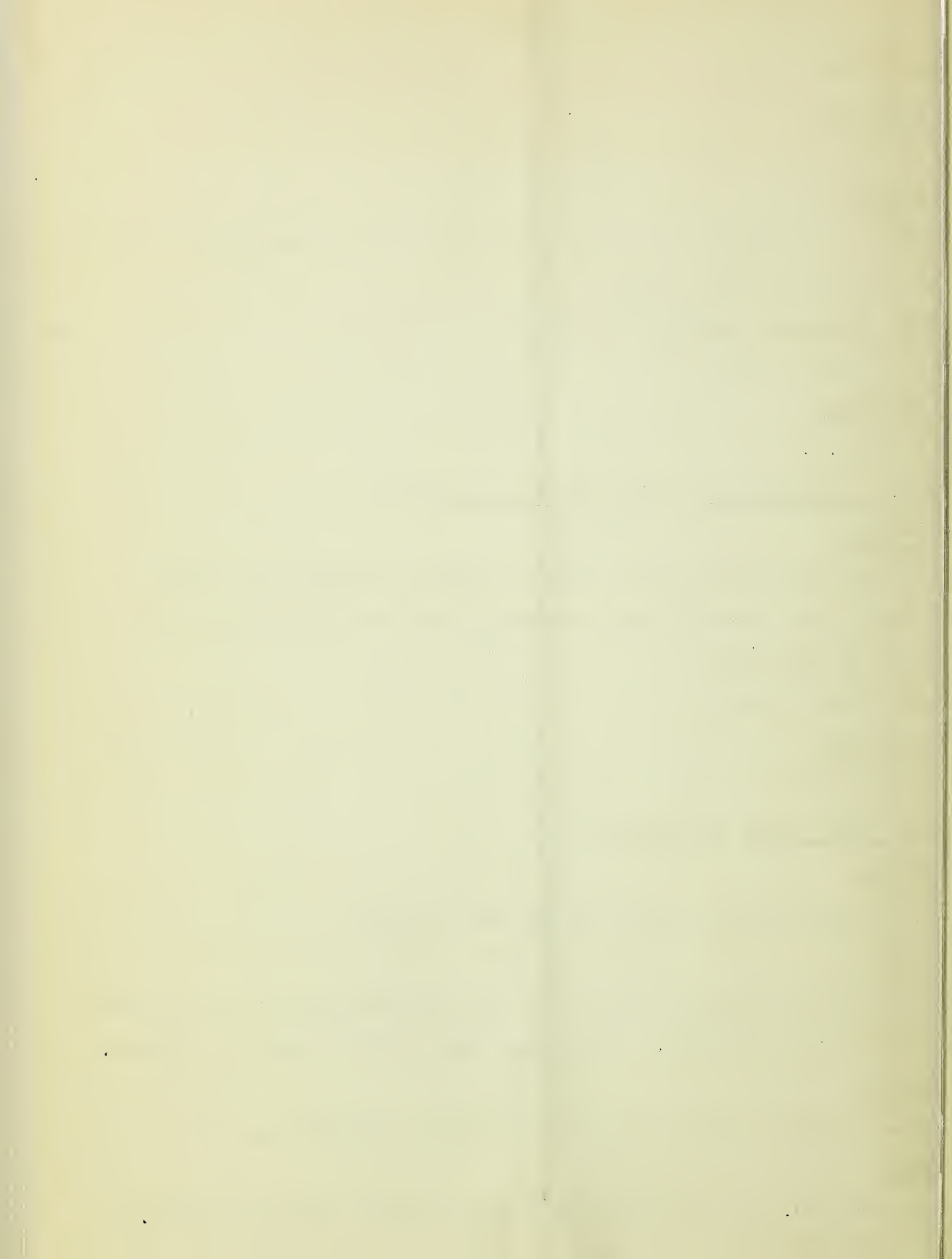
Pretty good, father. Ed and Bill are spreading corn fodder on that piece across the road. I'm going after another load after dinner.

FATHER

Wish I could go with you, but this blamed arthritis...

CARR

Yes, I know. You take it easy. We're getting along all right.



FATHER

I'm sure you are. This farm always has been a good one, high wheat yields and good corn crops year after year. And we've taken care of the land, too...

CARR

I've been thinking, though, father, that we've got to do more. Now you take some of those slopes. It's getting hard to keep up the yields wherever there's any washing.

FATHER

That's one thing we've got to watch--all the time. I'm glad you realize it.

CARR

I can't help but realize it. That's one thing you've drilled into me. Why, I can remember how we used to haul dirt from the road and put it back in the fields.

FATHER

But, of course, we've found out that that's impractical. But even more important, we've used rotations, lots of meadow, and--well, work like Ed is doing today, for example.

CARR

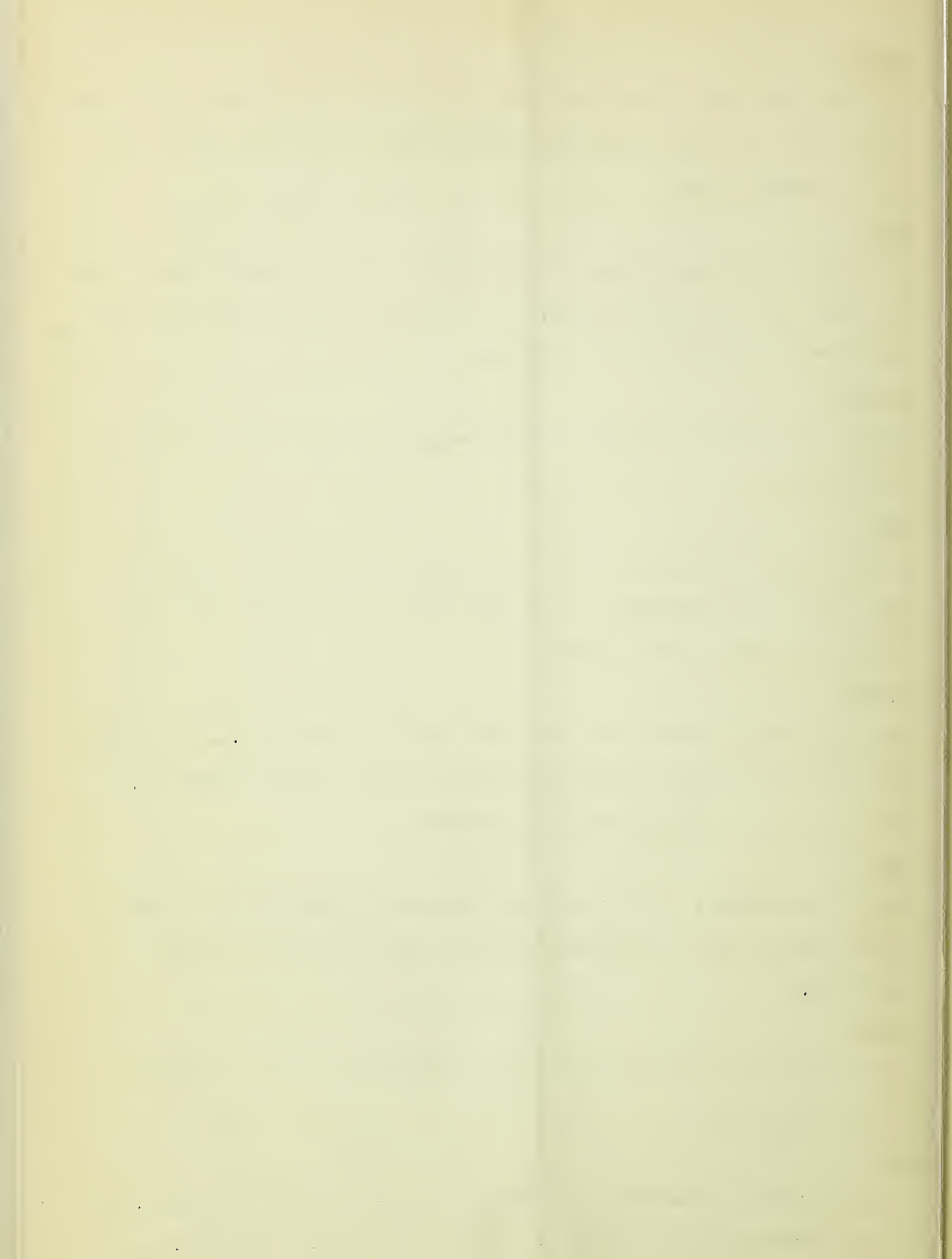
That is important. I've found out from experience that it pays to return everything to the land, manure, corn fodder, straw--everything.

FATHER

And you know what the result is. We don't have a gully on the place, not a one.

CARR

But we're being bothered more and more by sheet erosion, father. I don't know what to do, but we've got to stop it. I wonder...



FATHER

Yes?

CARR

I was just thinking...you know O. H. Anderson, don't you?

FATHER

...of the Extension Service? Oh, yes.

CARR

I heard him talking about strip cropping. Let's try it out on that slope east of the house this spring.

FATHER

Well, now maybe that's not such a bad idea after all. I've heard a little about it myself. Do you think you can lay out the strips by yourself?

CARR

Do I? I'm going to.

ORGAN: SINGING IN THE RAIN.

SOUND: Gentle rain.

CARR

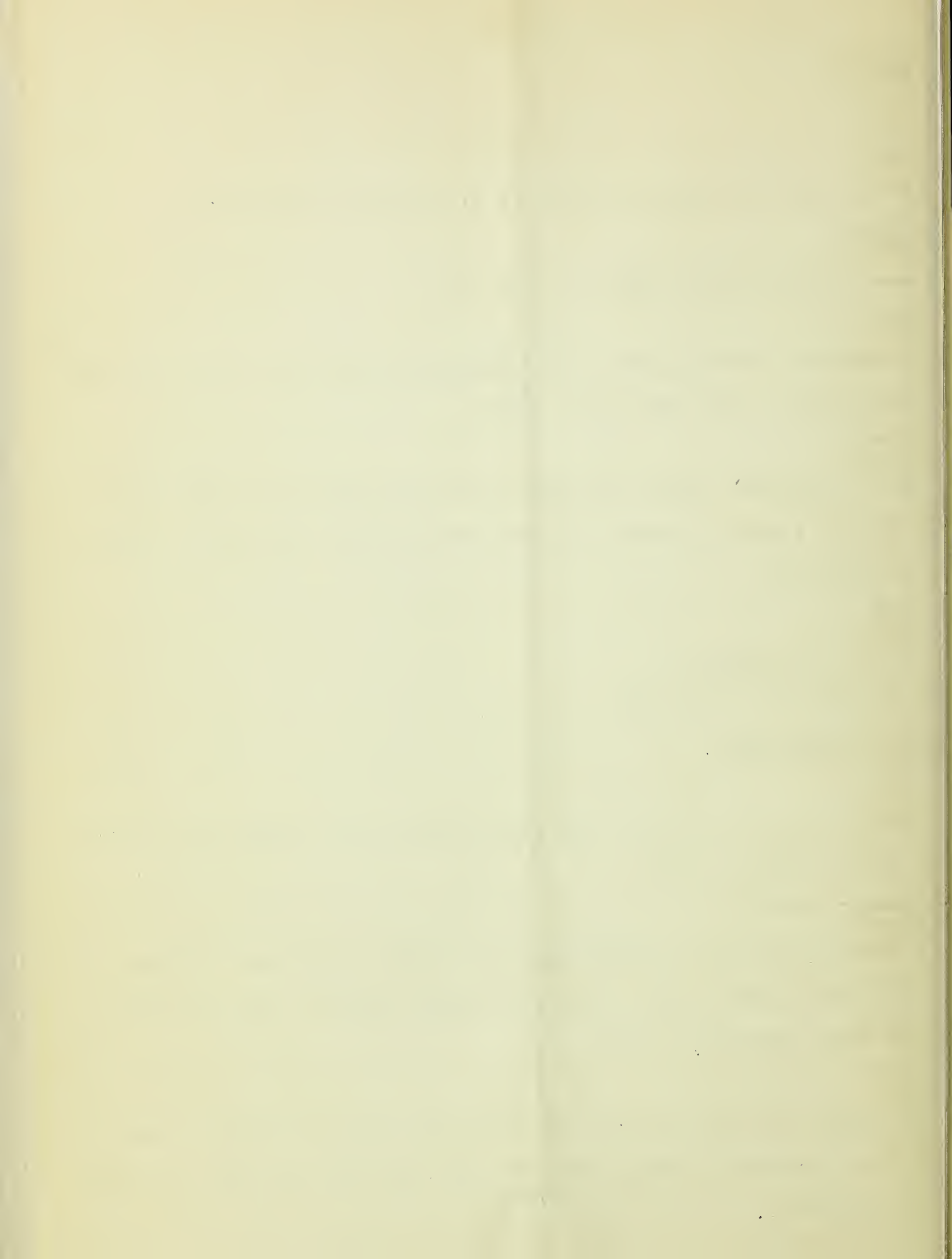
Father, come over here to the window, will you? I want you to take a look at those strips.

FATHER

I think I know what you're going to show me. I've been watching them during these rains we've been having lately. You don't see any muddy run-off, do you?

CARR

By George, you sure don't! Not even from the corn strips. That contour plowing is taking care of that! And you know how it always was before...



FATHER

We used to get a lot of washing after even a little rain, with the rows up and down the hill. There were tiny rills between the rows.

CARR

Yes, and something else. We've had as much as half of the corn wash clean out during the season, but the meadow strips have slowed up the water. That goes to show that...

FATHER

Someone's coming up the yard.

CARR

Where? Oh, yes, looks like Hugh Marble. And is he wet!

SOUND: Door opens.

CARR (calling out)

Come in out of that rain, you crazy fool!

MARBLE (fading in)

Swell day for ducks, eh, Carr?

CARR

I'll say it is. Come on in.

MARBLE

Thanks. Hello, Mr. Lentz.

SOUND: Door closes.

FATHER

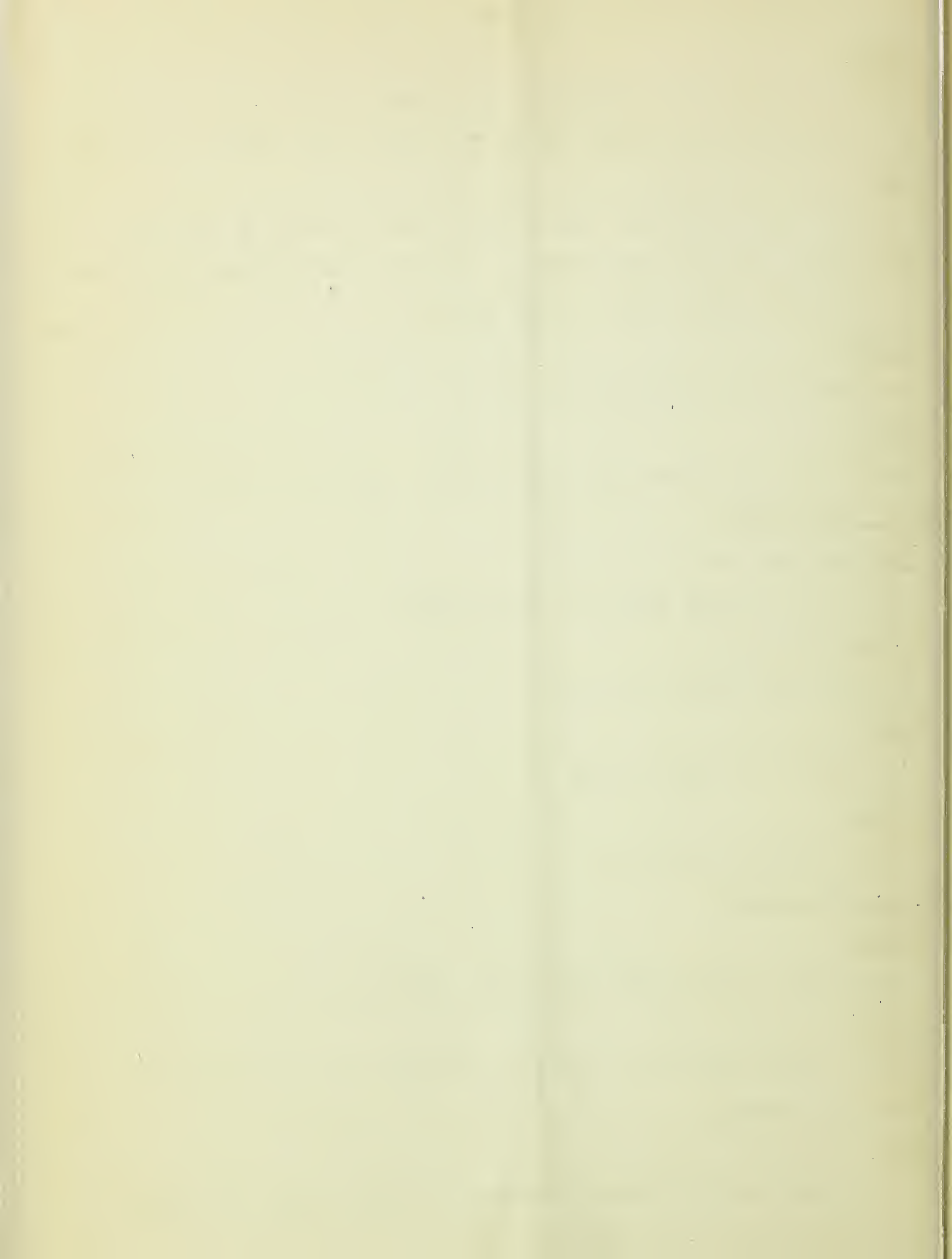
Hello, Hugh. Let me have your coat. There.

MARBLE

Thanks. Can't stay but a minute. Gotta go over to Charlestown for a few things.

CARR

We were just talking about that stripped field, Hugh. It's sure stopping that soil from washing.



MARBLE

I've been wondering about that. My terraces are doing fine, but I've never tried strip farming. Looks to me, though, that you won't have enough corn this year, with half of that field in meadow.

CARR

You'd be surprised, Hugh. I honestly believe that we're going to get as much off that field as we ever did when the whole thing was plowed. Those contour rows are doing the work.

MARBLE

I could have told you that. Mine sure help out. I've heard some people laugh at them, too.

CARR

I never thought I'd be plowing that way. You know, the farmer in this county prides himself on right angle corners. Gosh, we just can't imagine plowing any other way.

FATHER

But it looks like we're all going to have to come to it some day. I've raised Carr here on a soil conservation diet.

MARBLE (laughing)

Doesn't look as though it's hurt him any.

CARR

And it hasn't, either! And I'm learning a little every day. Now, I've got one field over there...you know the one, father, that's sorta humpy...

FATHER

Yes, the one that's always given a spotted stand.



CARR

That's the one. There are always a few spots on the steeper slopes where the corn just doesn't do good. I always thought that those spots were poor just because they were poor.

MARBLE

But the real reason was, that you were losing the soil and moisture on those spots.

CARR

Exactly. I'm convinced now, that we need a different soil conservation program than we've had before. So-called "careful farming," that is, long rotations, and a maximum of soil conserving crops is not enough to conserve our soil and its fertility. It takes a complete soil conservation plan.

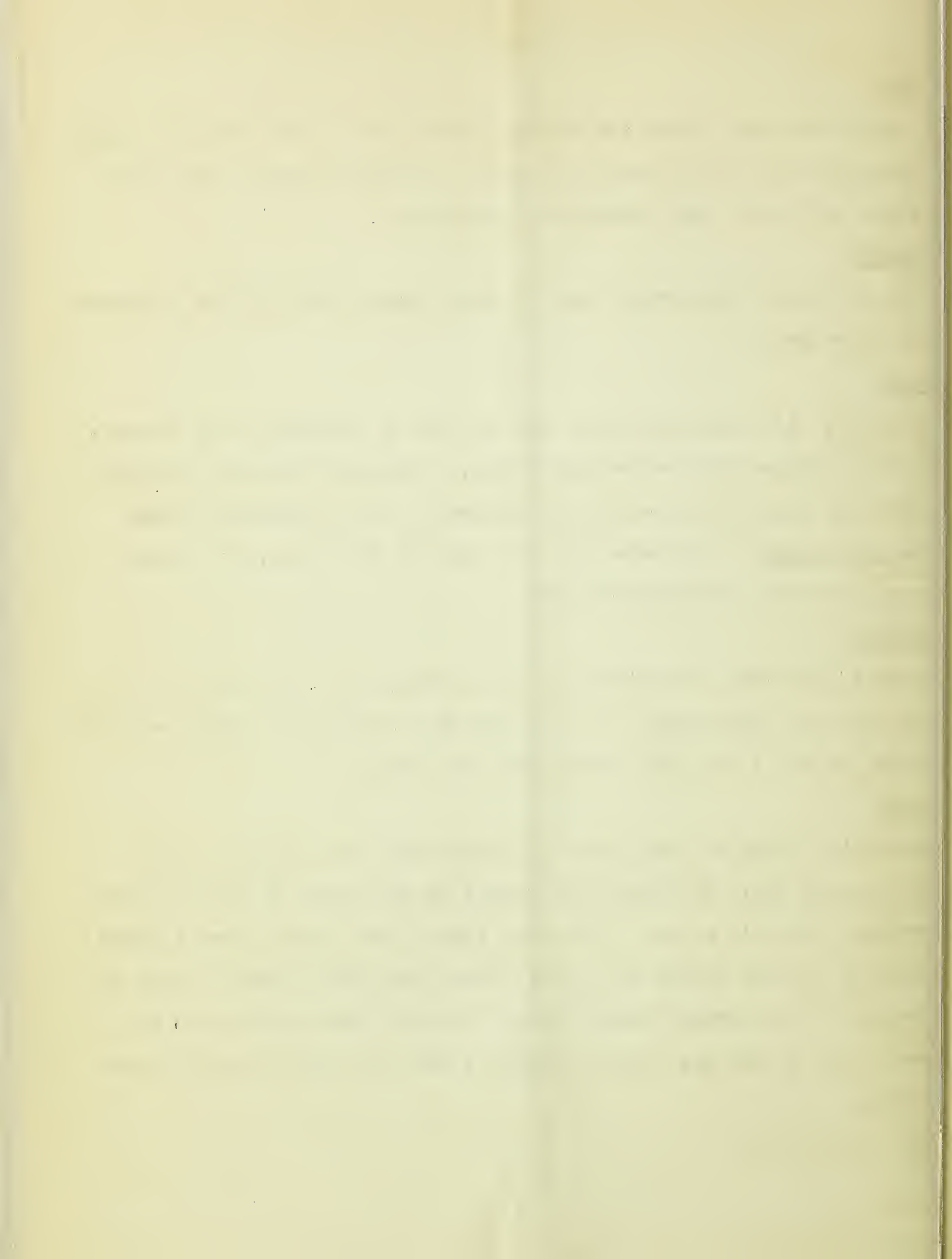
MARBLE

That's just what I'm putting in on my farm, Carr. You can't do it all at once, naturally. But you can do a little at a time, and the thing to do is to start before it's too late.

CARR

And we're going to keep right on along that line until we get it all worked out. My father has taught me the value of soil conservation, and it's a part of my very life. Once upon a time I heard about a boy who looked up at his father and said, "Daddy, where is the soil that covered these rocks?" I don't want my boy Tom to ever have to ask me, "Daddy, where is the soil that covered these rocks."

ORGAN: SONNY BOY.



ANNOUNCER

That is the story of William Carr Lentz, champion corn grower, and one of a line of conservation-minded farmers. And Carr Lentz will tell you that you can't continue to grow championship corn on land that washes away, down Silver Creek and down the Ohio. And as he plans his farm for erosion control, control in every field, he doesn't worry about young Tom Lentz ever asking, "Daddy, where is the soil that covered these rocks?"

ORGAN: SONNY BOY.

ANNOUNCER

And now, once more we turn to the Dayton, Ohio, regional office of the Soil Conservation Service, and to Ewing Jones.

JONES

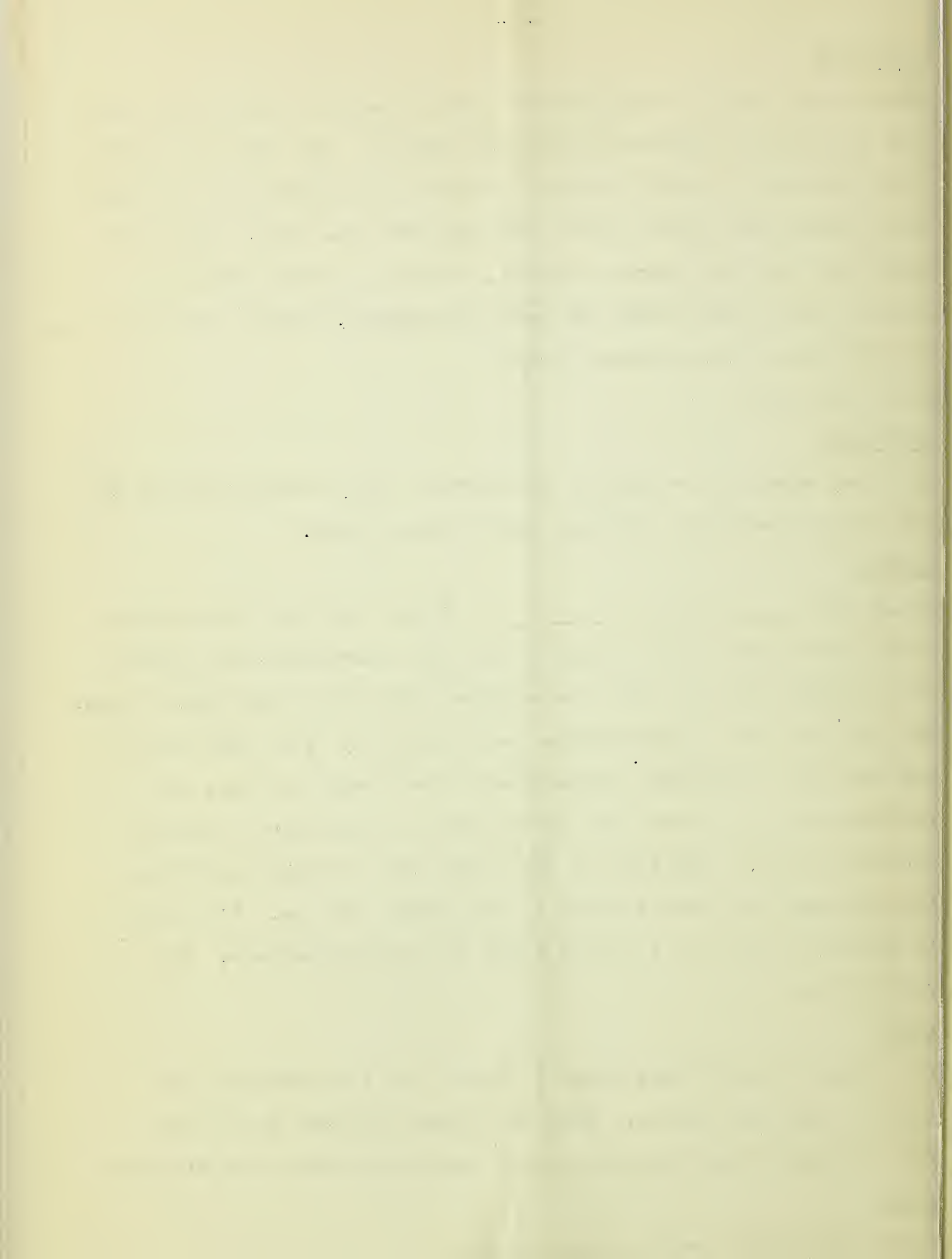
Thank you, _____. To me, the most encouraging thing about Carr Lentz's story is not his remarkable corn production records, but the sane, far-sighted attitude he has taken toward the need for soil conservation. As he puts it, "I am sure that I can take any reasonable, open-minded farmer over our farm, and convince him in an hour that sheet erosion constitutes a serious problem for us." But here, I don't know why I should be quoting him, because Mr. Lentz is here in the studio with us. I'm going to ask him to tell us a little about his farming methods. Mr. Carr Lentz.

LENTZ

Mr. Jones, I hardly know where to start, and I'm certainly not going to make any speech. That is, unless you want me to give you my ideas on soil erosion, and I could talk about that all day.

JONES

That's just what I want to hear about.



LENTZ

Well, to me, the term "insidious monster" just about paints the picture. That may sound a little dramatic, but that's just the way I look at erosion. It's insidious because it is such a subtle process, creeping up on us almost unaware. And it's a monster because it is so huge in its scope.

JONES

That's a pretty good way of putting it, at that. Now, in your new soil conservation plan, strip cropping obviously will play an important part.

LENTZ

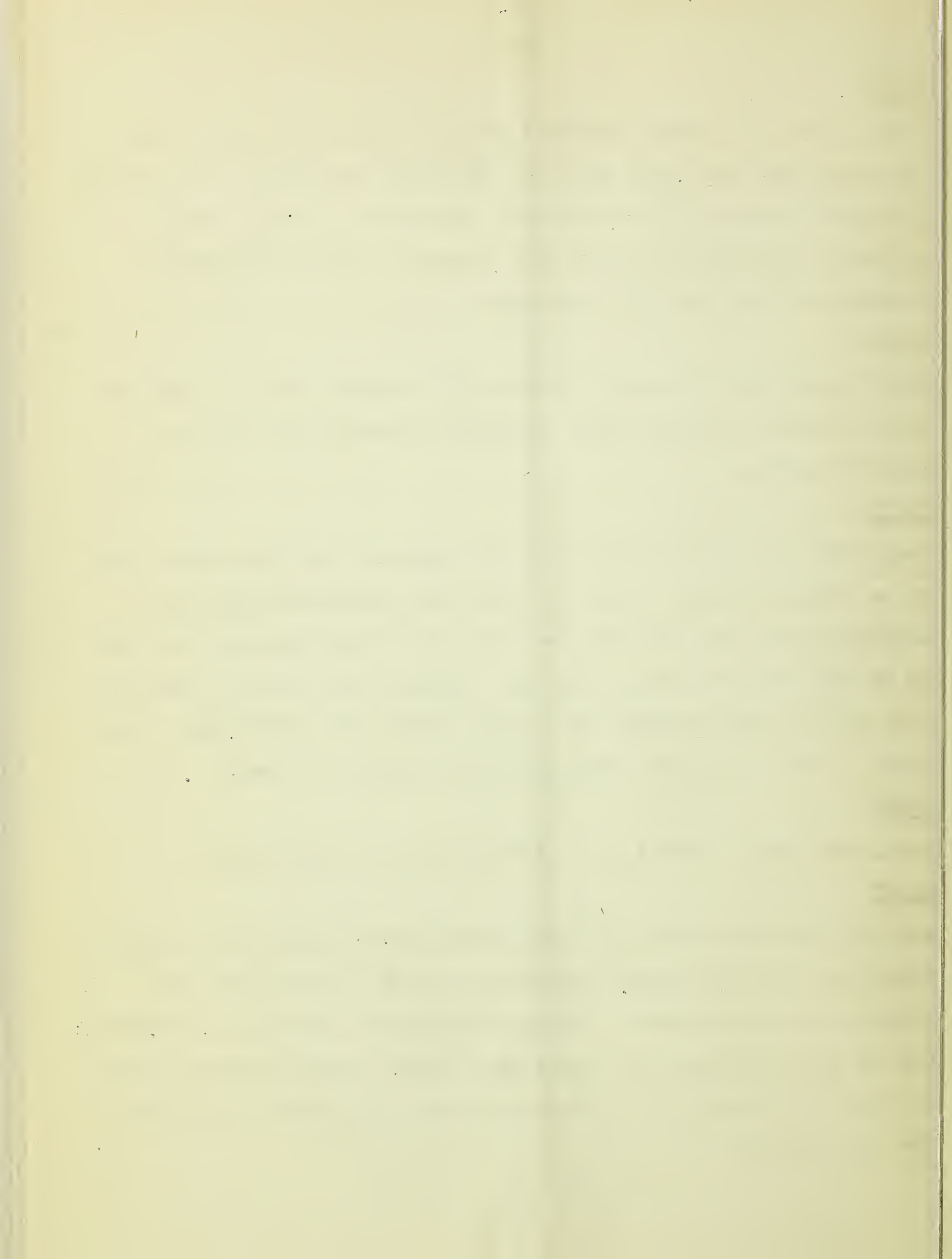
Very much so. My experience with the strips I laid out myself sold me on strip farming. I have a cooperative agreement with the Lexington CCC camp, and the plan calls for every slope on the farm to be laid out for strip cropping. In all, about half of the crop area will be strip-farmed and contour plowed and cultivated. Then three of the fields will have diversion ditches in them.

JONES

Well, now, that's what I call getting off to a good start.

LENTZ

And it's just the start. I have several areas which, due to their location, never have been profitably planted to crops, and I'm planting them with trees. I'm rearranging the fields, and lengthening my crop rotations to include more meadow, and, of course, we'll continue fertilizing the fields as usual. I'm really happy about the whole thing.



JONES

A plan like yours ought to have a number of advantages in addition to saving the soil.

LENTZ

There are a number of things that appeal to me. First, of course, is that I'll have more efficient land use. The level land will be in a four-year rotation. The slopes will be in a six- and eight-year rotation, and all our alfalfa hay will be grown on them. And here's another thing: heretofore we haven't grown corn and wheat on our level land often enough, possibly because we were afraid of erosion on the slopes in the same field.

JONES

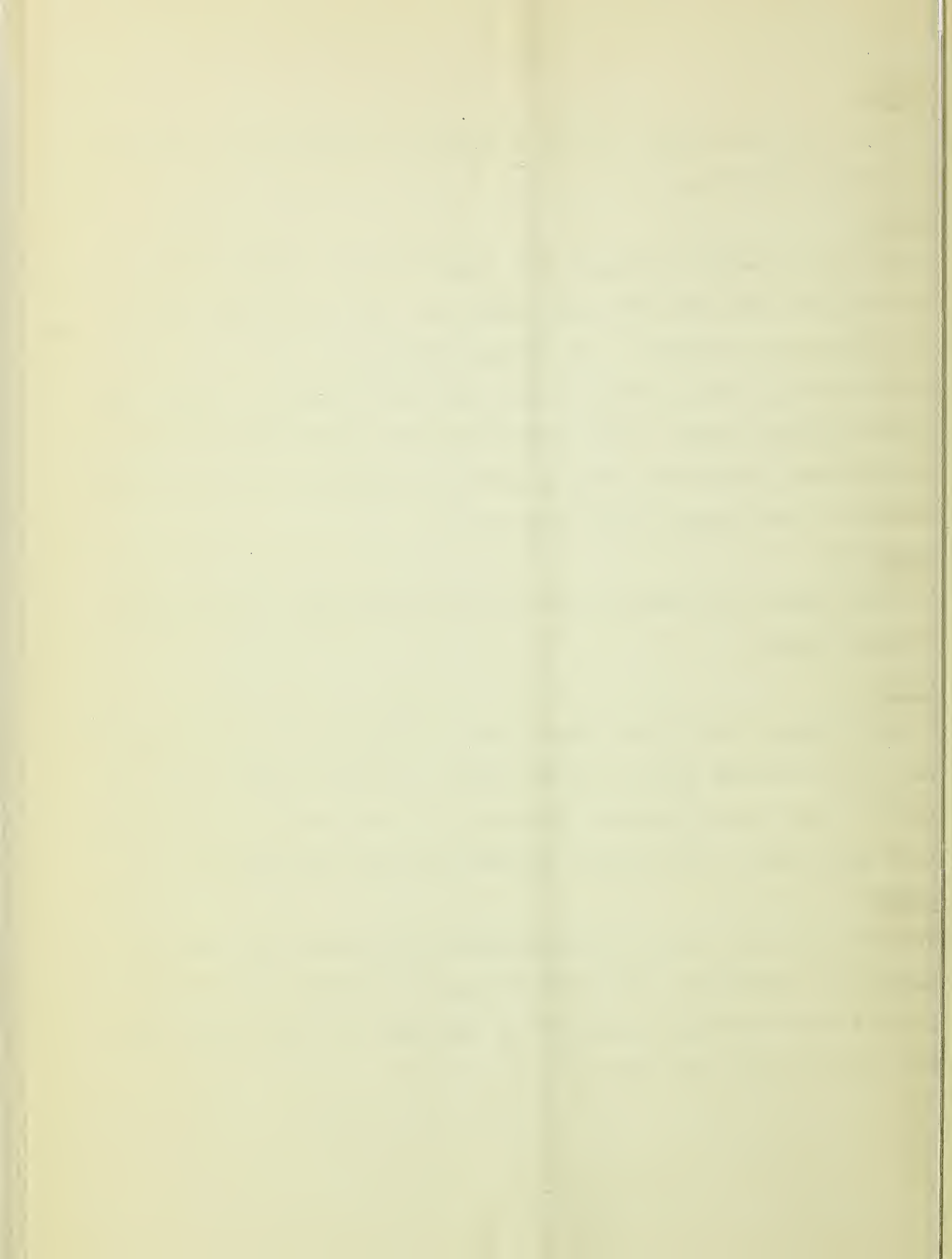
In other words, you wasted some of the better land to protect the thinner slopes.

LENTZ

That's right. Then I like this idea of working on the contour. All of our tillage will be on the level, so there won't be any more of this pulling horses, tractors, or men up-hill. And we'll have many rows of corn longer than we have ever had before.

JONES

And, too, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are making an intelligent, effective effort to conserve water and to prevent that "insidious monster" as you call it, from taking away the fertility of your farm.



LENTZ

That feeling of satisfaction is most important of all. After every rain, I won't have to worry about the little ditches and rivulets down every corn and wheat row that previously took the soil away. I believe that by this new method of handling our farm, I will be able to leave it to my son in a higher state of fertility than it is now.

JONES

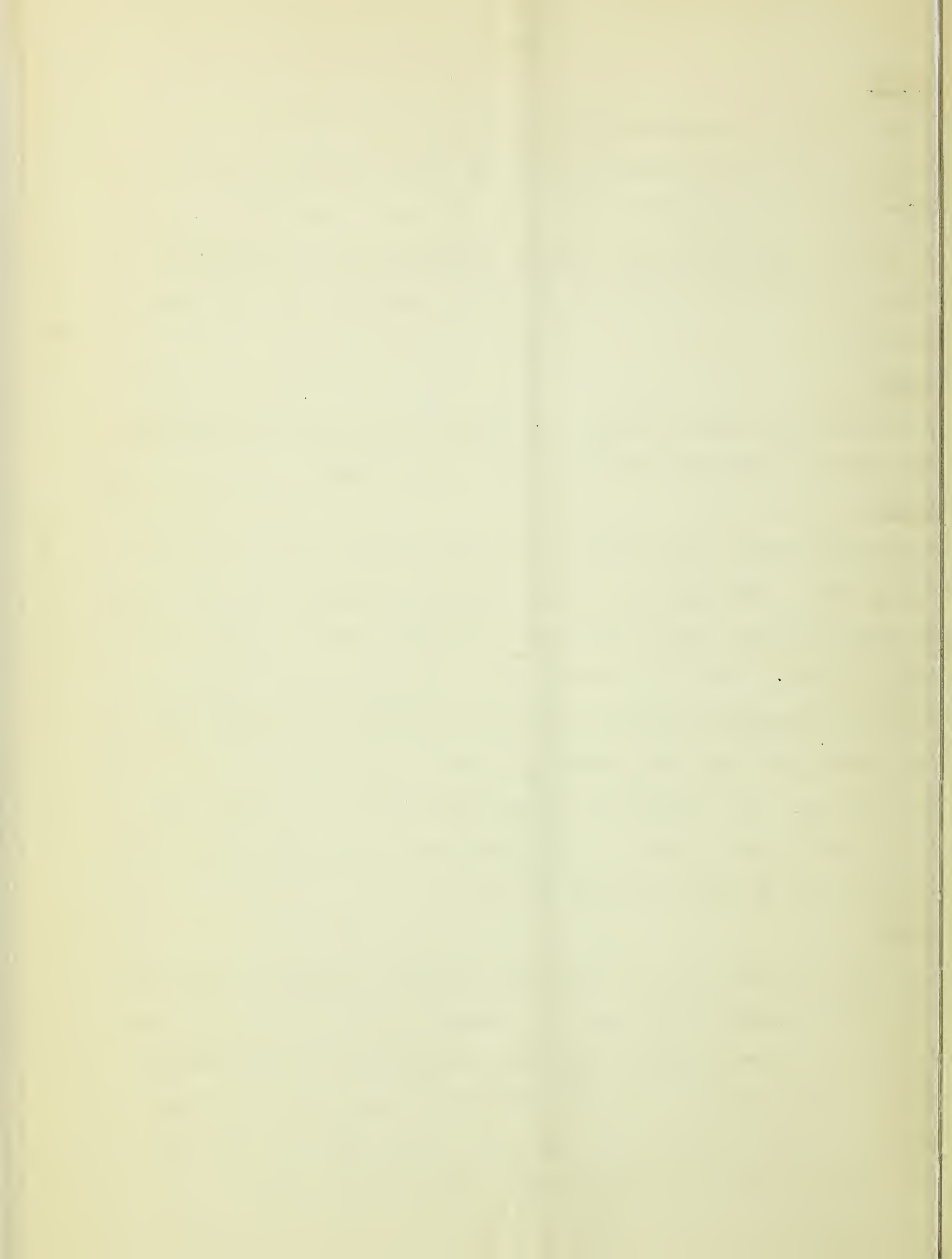
I can see one thing clearly, Mr. Lentz, you're going to remember the years of 1938 and 1939 for a long, long time.

LENTZ

I certainly will. Naturally I look back with a lot of pride on 1935, when I won the Grand Championship at Chicago. Any man would be proud of that, especially here in Indiana where we grow corn that is corn. But I'll remember 1938 and 1939, too, as years in which an opportunity came my way to do something good--not only for myself but also for posterity. And by posterity I don't mean just my son, but everyone who comes along after I'm gone. This land doesn't just belong to my father and to me. The generations to come have an equal interest in it.

JONES

And they will have you to thank for it, and I certainly thank you for coming up here, William Carr Lentz, of Clark County, Indiana. It's mighty encouraging to know that more and more farmers--men like you--are adopting the same attitude. And as they do, our farmlands will become more secure, and fewer boys will have to ask, "Daddy, where is the soil that covered these rocks?"



ANNOUNCER

Now, Ewing, what is our story for next week?

JONES

Next week, _____, we're going to leave Clark County, Indiana, and go out to the so-called dust bowl--black blizzards.

ORGAN: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

If you would like a copy of the bulletin, "Conserving Corn Belt Soil," containing 60 pages of information on the same soil-saving methods used by Mr. Lentz, write to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio, and ask for the bulletin, "Conserving Corn Belt Soil."

Next week, Black Blizzards...

SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away is a studio presentation of the agriculture department of the Nation's Station.

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